DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 228 680 CS 504 180

AUTHOR Draper, Mary Jo
TITLE Rich News: Metropolitan Dailies and the Urban Poor.
INSTITUTION Freedom of Information Center, Columbia, Mo.
REPORT NO FOI-471
PUB DATE Mar 83
NOTE 9p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Advertising; Demography; *Economically Disadvantaged; *Economic Factors; Futures (of Society); *Journalism; Media Research; *Newspapers; News Writing; *Urban Areas; Urban Population; Urban Problems; Urban to Suburban Migration

ABSTRACT

The migration of people from cities to suburbs, new patterns of advertising, a less homogeneous and unified readership, and increasing competition from other media have produced tremendous pressures on daily newspapers. In responding to these pressures, metropolitan dailies are turning from "hard" to "soft" news, away from their poorer urban readers and toward the more affluent consumers of the "life style" sections. Because advertising has replaced circulation as the chief source of a newspaper's revenue, demography has replaced geography in defining its market. Targeting advertising to "desirable" zip codes may also be replacing any interest in "less desirable" readers. Locked in mortal economic combat, newspapers make little effort to attract poor urban readers, but much effort to court the young consumers of the future. Most likely, tomorrow's newspapers will be targeted for special audiences, though the urban poor are unlikely to be among them. On the bright side, the future holds the promise of prospering community papers (and still threatened metropolitan dailies), national papers such as "USA Today," and even electronic newspapers. (JL)

**********
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
**********

ED228680

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM, UNIVERSITY OF MISSOURI AT COLUMBIA
MARCH, 1983

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Freedom of Information Center
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

# RICH NEWS: METROPOLITAN DAILIES AND THE URBAN POOR

**FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CENTER REPORT NO. 471**

**This report was written by Mary Jo Draper, a master's candidate at the University of Missouri School of Journalism.**

> When I was a kid, we had four dailies here. Everybody took at least three of them because they sold for two cents apiece. My father would get the morning **Globe** delivered to our house. My father would buy the **Star-Times** on his lunch break and keep it. And on his way home, he'd buy the **Post-Dispatch**, so he'd bring the **Star-Times** and **Post-Dispatch** home.
>
> So we had three newspapers in our home every day. It was the only game in town. There was no television. Radio was one of those things, you could sit down and listen to Jack Benny or Fibber McGee and Molly and still have your newspaper. — Jim Fox, Reader's Advocate, St. Louis **Post-Dispatch**[1]

St. Louis and other industrial cities have changed since Jim Fox was that kid more than 50 years ago. So have the newspapers that report on those cities. Both have been hurt by the flight of city residents and newspaper readers to the suburbs. Both have suffered economic troubles.

For a variety of reasons, fathers like Jim Fox's no longer stroll along busy streets depositing pennies into newspaper boxes in such cities as St. Louis or Detroit, Chicago or Philadelphia, New York or Buffalo. For a variety of reasons, metropolitan newspapers have experienced a decline in readership from their all-time high in the 1880s when, in their heyday, urban newspapers truly could be called a mass medium.

Today, urban newspapers are experiencing what one media analyst calls "de-massification."[2] That process has lead some critics to charge that newspapers are abandoning the cities, or more precisely the urban poor. University of California professor Ben Bagdikian, for one, contends that metropolitan newspapers deliberately avoid selling copies in the inner cities:

> The new corporate ethic in news is ending the impulse to get the news to as many people as possible. Sophisticated merchandising strategies by advertisers and media response to those strategies is (sic) altering the role of major news institutions in American society. Some metropolitan newspapers wish to sell their papers only to the affluent, and they are using marketing techniques to design their content and control their circulation primarily for the benefit of big spenders.[3]

Managers of metropolitan newspapers deny Bagdikian's charge. It would be surprising if they admitted to deliberately turning away from the one-third of the urban population that lives in the central city, the one-third that comprises most of the 33 million families who earn less than $10,000 a year.

Newspaper editors, publishers and critics do agree on at

**Summary**

Urban out-migration, changes in the economic base of newspapers, and heightened competition have altered the traditional relationship between metropolitan dailies and urban residents, especially the poor. That change has sparked debate about whether the urban press truly is serving the needs of today's urban citizens.

CS504182

least one point — metropolitan newspapers are in a period of intense self-examination. Some observers argue that the problems facing big-city newspapers today may well confront medium-sized newspapers tomorrow, and spell the demise of general interest newspapers altogether in the future.

As urban newspapers continue their self-examination, the way they look at their problems will determine the kind of solutions they will pursue.

Michael O'Neill, former editor of the troubled Daily News of troubled New York City and a recent president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, urges his colleagues to think of the present as a critical time for the industry:

> We must begin to re-examine what we are and what we should be, in the same way the railroads should have redefined their function when trucks began threatening their business after World War II. To do anything less will be asking for trouble.[4]

## PART I: FIGURES IN A LOCAL DRAMA — THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AN URBAN NEWSPAPER AND ITS READERS

> Overwhelmingly, the sense of being a part of the city, its scene, and its problems has been the creation of the media, and especially of the daily press. — Leo Bogart[5]

When Jim Fox's father strolled through the streets of St. Louis, urban newspaper readers arguably were a more homogenous group than they are today. Leo Bogart, an advertising researcher who has written extensively on the newspaper-city relationship, described it this way:

> Newspaper reading increased as the cities grew, and the reader's awareness of his city was heightened by the visibility that newspapers gave to municipal personalities and problems. The newspaper provided a common fund of reference points of personality as well as place: people who held office and sought office, objects of adulation or gossip, figures of achievement or scandal. Their names and portraits aroused interest and discussion precisely because they were figures in a local drama in which every newspaper reader could feel himself at least a minor player. The interest was heightened because a highly competitive press constantly presented these common reference points from alternative points of view. Competing newspapers held up different facets of the city's affairs to scrutiny and speculation and often clashed dramatically in their editorial opinion.[6]

That classic relationship between newspapers and readers began to change in the 1960s. Cities across the United States experienced turmoil. Many city residents moved to the suburbs and became readers of suburban weeklies or dailies. The impact upon newspapers has been tremendous.

Today's cities are no longer united communities with a common fund of reference points. Regardless whether newspapers are a part of the cause or only victims of that situation, their editors must wrestle with finding news of interest to all their readers.

Yet readers differ more now than in the past. They represent a wider range of geographical locations, races, ethnic groups, interests, incomes, education levels and reasons for reading newspapers. Editors may well wonder if they are indeed trying to be all things to all people.

But if they cannot be all-pervasive, how will they decide what to be and to which people? In the 1970s, many newspapers tried a Band-Aid approach to satisfying a full range of reader interests. New sections were added for each group of readers. The hope was to meet the needs of each group rather than to appeal generally to every indvidual.

But problems persisted. The competing newspapers that Bogart spoke of continued to disappear. Ten of the country's most populous cities currently do not have competing dailies.[7] As the trend toward one-newspaper cities continues, readers will find ever fewer divergent viewpoints, fewer "facets of the city's affairs held up to scrutiny."

One frequently cited reason for the rise of one-newspaper cities is the continuing population shift from the major urban centers to surrounding suburbs. Leo Bogart offers another reason — a decline in urban civic spirit, a decline he says partly results from changes in the competitive structure of the mass media itself.[8]

Newspapers originally helped to build that civic spirit, Bogart says. But then the market changed. Instead of relying principally upon local advertisers, newspapers began to deal with department stores and retailers interested in readers in outlying areas. Papers reached outward to give advertisers what they wanted, even if it it meant stretching their news staffs to cover increasingly disjointed parts of the metropolitan area.

A transformation in retailing and competitive pressure from radio and television were additional factors, Bogart adds. Retailers began to draw most of their business from suburban areas. Direct mail, printed shoppers, suburban newspapers and local television stations offered advertisers access to that suburban market. Newspapers retaliated with expanded suburban news coverage and special suburban editions.

Newspapers' response also included a more subtle shift in content, away from such issues as mass transportation, racial patterns in public housing, the maintenance of residential neighborhoods and the integration of local schools — issues Bogart describes as high priorities for urban areas — and toward what some critics call "soft news."

The changes may be subtle, but according to Michael Massing, **Columbia Journalism Review** editor, their overall impact has altered the kind of stories editors assign, reporters write about and the public reads.[9]

Massing says newspapers have sought to attract readers in affluent suburbs by publishing more features and trend articles. In the process, newspapers have lost "important constituencies in their own backyards — blacks, Hispanics, the poor and disenfranchised. Even if they have not always

been regular readers, they have been championed, to some extent, by urban papers, which focused public attention on slumlords and police brutality, on malnourished children and the despair of ghetto youths."[10]

Massing touches upon an important point. Inner-city residents are not forming commissions to study changes in the newspaper industry. They might not read daily newspapers. If they do, they might not notice the trend toward soft news. They might display their displeasure by turning to special interest or ethnic newspapers.

It is the newspaper critics from within and without the industry who have rallied to the defense of urban readers. Their defense rests upon the premise that newspapers have a responsibility to serve all parts of society. Yet not all newspaper managers accept that premise.

The concept of social responsibility is graphically described in the Kerner Commission report on the urban unrest of the 1960s. The Kerner report said: "By and large, news organizations have failed to communicate to both their black and white audiences a sense of the problems America faces and sources of potential solutions."[11]

Bagdikian argues that a sense of social responsibility has special significance to inner-city residents. Those residents, he argues, have a greater need for informative newspapers than suburbanites, who already have access to better services, educational facilities and other social advantages.

Bagdikian says the pattern of newspapers shifting their attention to affluent readers, of starting to provide information along social and economic class lines, is a recurring one in contemporary America. As with other formally multi-class urban institutions — schools, workplaces, communities — daily newspapers also are becoming one-class institutions, he says. [12]

John Morton, a former reporter and current newspaper analyst, disagrees with the argument of critics that newspapers are shirking their responbility to central city residents: "The changing economics of the media business have changed the role newspapers must play. If it is the first duty of newspapers to inform the public so that the people may make responsible choices in a democratic society, a corollary is the duty to stay in business. The first cannot exist without the second."[13]

Morton offers the example of the New York **Times**, one target of such criticism. The **Times** still offers its readers international, national and local news, he says, but has now expanded its features and other soft news. Morton argues the information market has changed, so the **Times** is responding by providing a wider range of information to its readers.

Jim Fox, former city editor of the St. Louis **Post-Dispatch**, sees little harm in the Life Style section that newspaper has adopted: "On any given day of publication, there are only about six stories that have to be printed. The rest are chosen by editorial whim. Life could go on if most stories were not printed."

Bogart questions such easy-going acceptance of soft news: "But can newspapers in their self-interest make anything less than a total committment to the effort to restore our cities and to restore that effort to top priority in our nation?" He continues:

> In the long run, the internal migrations that have transformed our central cities may have a positive effect on the newspaper medium. Large numbers of people are moving out of an impoverished, isolated, and semi-literate environment into a society with urban information needs. But it may take more than a generation for this transformation to take effect, and not every big city newspaper can afford to wait that long.[14]

In the debate among newspaper managers, we find more references to a committment to advertisers than of a committment to inner cities. Members of every institution accept certain myths — the uncritical acceptance of certain beliefs, especially in support of traditional practices or institutions. If newspaper managers accept the prevalent myths of their industry, it must appear to them that they cannot wait for the generation-long transformation Bogart forecasts.

## PART II: CONTEMPORARY MYTHS OF THE NEWSPAPER BUSINESS — THE MARKET IS THE MESSAGE

> Newsmen who insist that newspapers should stick to hard news and stop spending so much money on stories that belong in women's magazines are as out of date as linotype machines. — John Morton[15]

In 1947 the Hutchins Commission on Freedom of the Press described the duty of the press as; "The projection of a representative picture of the constituent groups in the society. . . .(T)he images repeated and emphasized should be totally representative of the social group as it is, showing its values, aspirations and common humanity as well as its weaknesses and vices."[16]

The key consideration is the social group. Critics have assumed the social group was determined geographically — that the social group was the entire city and its surrounding suburbs.

However, executives in the newspaper business have a different perspective. Management, especially in urban industrial centers, is responding to financial crisis. Managers listen not only to reporters and editors, but also to advertising departments, circulation experts and marketing specialists. Whereas newspapers once dominated their relationship with advertisers, the growth of retail chain stores has given advertisers a greater impact on newspaper management decisions.[17]

Newspapers now have the financial need and the technical ability to view the newspapers market in terms other than only geographic. As one observer explains:

> The changing pattern of human activity within a geographical area has weakened the traditional definition of the market as a place where people live and buy. Thus it has become common to use the term "market" differently than in the past, to

> define a sector of society distinguished by a common state of mind, a common set of interests or a common position in the life cycle.[18]

The post office zip code, introduced in the 1950s, made it possible to separate geographic areas into distinct marketing targets. Newspapers in the 1970s had access to marketing techniques that allowed them to delineate social groups by family size, income, education and occupation for each market area. Newspapers gained the ability to categorize readers by their consumption patterns.

To newspaper circulation departments, the advantages were apparent. Virgil Fassio, circulation director of the Detroit **Free Press**, addressed a meeting of International Newspaper Advertising Executives in 1971. He summed up the situation:

> 'Demographics' has entered the picture. Today, advertising is still interested in quantity, but is even more interested in the quality of the readers. What is his income? Where does he live? How can he be reached?[19]

Fassio mentioned that as much as 40 percent of an urban newspaper's market may reside in the inner city. He advised circulation directors to discover ways to reach those readers. But Fassio's comments came 10 years ago, when cities were a more hopeful topic of discussion.

Bagdikian says changes in the economic base of newspapers underlay their shift from geographic to demographic marketing approaches. In the 1880s, he says, newspapers needed all the readers they could attract because circulation was the principal source of newspaper income. That created an equality among readers. One man's two cents was just as good as another's.

Today, advertising has supplanted circulation as the major source of newspaper income. The average newspaper in 1983 receives about three-fourths of its revenue from advertising. Newspapers now view impoverished city dwellers as less important readers because advertisers now view them as undesirable customers, Bagdikian says.[20]

That is not to say editors have consciously decided to ignore low-income readers. Michael O'Neill calls Bagdikian's thesis "hogwash."[21] O'Neill says his former New York newspaper could ill afford to turn its back on New York neighborhoods even if it wanted to.

Yet, **Daily News** Executive Editor James Wieghart says his newswpaper did try in the 1970s to compete for "upscale" readers. Wieghart now calls that effort a mistake. He says the **Daily News** must try to win back inner-city residents:

> It is a waste of our energy, time and money to compete in the suburbs. Our problem is not out-migration. The real problem is covering the newcomers to the city, the Latinos and the southerners, whether they are black or white.[22]

Yet the **Daily News** and many other newspapers are proceeding with zoned suburban editions in their effort to deliver readers from market areas that appeal to advertisers. The editions partly are a response to the shoppers and suburban newspapers that are well-suited to serving suburban audiences.

"Targeting" is the state-of-the-art weapon in dailies' competition with suburban newspapers. An advertiser determines which zip code areas deliver the greatest return on sales efforts. The newspaper then inserts advertising supplements only into the subscriptions reaching the desired zip code region.

Jim Fox of the **Post-Dispatch** answers calls from readers who sometimes are more interested in advertising supplements than the news. The newspaper can be put in a difficult position when it receives a complaint from a reader who has paid the same subscription or newstand price as other readers yet didn't receive the same full complement of advertising.

Fox sometimes suggests that the disgruntled customer contact the advertiser and complain that the practice is discriminatory. Remedies are limited, Fox explains;

> Unfortunately, we can't control it. Now technically we could control it. We could say to the advertiser, if you want your message in the **Post-Dispatch**, it has to go full run. But again, because newspapers are business institutions, we have to give some thought to what the advertiser wants.[23]

The combination of advertisers' demand for targeted audiences and the rise of technologies to deliver those audiences has led some observers to forsee the end to general interest newspapers altogether. Newspapers, as are other communication media, are moving from the mass to the specialized, from the generic to the individualized.

The flip side of the phenomenon offers an exciting prospect — readers with the wherewithal may receive newspapers tailored to their specific interests. But what of the poor, uneducated, inarticulate readers?

## ADVERTISERS DON'T NEED 100 PERCENT OF THE MARKET

Newspaper advertising is big business. In 1981, it accounted for more than 28 percent of total U.S. advertising expenditures. The most significant trend in newspaper advertising today is the growing dominance of national advertising. Advertisers reaching a nationwide audience have different market needs than local advertisers:

> One is the retailer who must draw his customers from a specific geographic zone. The other is the national advertiser who is aiming his product or service at a particular type of individual who can use his product. The extent he can eliminate the non-potential user marks the relative efficiency of the medium.[24]

One way advertisers may eliminate non-potential users is through direct mail. The advertiser selects the neighborhoods or specific types of individuals he wants to receive his message.

For newspapers, the problem with direct mail has been that not all urban residents subscribe to their metropolitan daily. But now newspapers are exploring ways to deliver the direct mail market to advertisers. Circulation departments are developing and buying lists of non-subscribers and offering advertisers the opportunity to supplement newspaper advertising with direct mail coverage to specific geographic or demographic groups.[25]

Such efforts signal a major trend in the newspaper industry — the diversification of the newspaper company. Owners and managers of newspapers no longer limit the role of daily newspapers to providing news and entertainment to its readers. They increasingly have come to see newspapers as providing a full range of services to advertisers. Such nationwide retailers as Montgomery Wards, Sears, K-Mart and Penneys want 100 percent market coverage in some areas, says advertisng expert Dick Tuller: "Advertisers don't need 100 percent of a market. . . but in their most important zip codes, in most markets, Penneys, Sears and Wards do want 100 percent of the homes."[26]

Left unspoken is the resulting flow of editorial and advertising attention away from the unwanted zip code areas to those that offer the attraction of high levels of discretionary income.

## NEWSPAPERS ARE NO LONGER THE MEDIUM OF THE MASSES

Television has altered the content of newspapers and forced them to redefine their markets. Some newspaper manager believe television has replaced daily newspapers as the nation's mass medium.

A 1970 study tested that belief. It found low-income people to be considerably different from the general public in their use of the media. Low-income blacks were found to be similar to low-income whites in most areas of communication, but were less likely to read newspapers. The study indicated there may be a disinclination among poor blacks to read newspapers because they do not see their lives reflected in the pages of the dailies: another chicken-or-the-egg situation.[27]

During the 1970s, a debate developed between analysts who said the newspaper as an institution was dead and those who argued it was merely sick. Numerous studies, some with contradictory results, appeared in industry journals.

Despite the presence of varied research results, as long as newspaper managers continue to believe that poor urban readers have abandonded them, those manager will feel justified modifying the content of their newspapers for the benefit of the readers who remain.

Yet Bagdikian offers statistics indicating that low-income elderly, poor and less-educated segments of society do, indeed, read newspapers in substantial numbers.[28]

There is another social group that newspaper managers fear is losing the newspaper habit. That group is the young. It is enlightening to compare the way newspapers have reacted to the prospect of losing young readers with the perceived loss of low-income readers.

There is a common belief that young people favor television for both news and entertainment over newspapers. A 1979 study segmented the media market into age groups and analyzed readership and viewing patterns for each. It found that the 19-24 age group principally relied on television for its news.[29] However, the study also showed that the young adults relied upon newspapers for advertising information. Indeed, the youngsters were more reliant on newspapers for advertising than older age groups. Older readers principally were interested in reading about local events, schools, churches and religion. Readers in the 25-45 age group sought out information in ads, how-to articles and entertainment listings.

But many observers assert that low-income people also have turned toward television in lieu of daily newspapers. Yet many of the changes being made in newspapers today are part of an attempt to win back the young. What makes the young readers more attractive than poor readers? A **Wall Street Journal** analysis of marketing in the 1980s provides some insight:

> Almost half the families in which both husband and wife work have heads of household who are under thirty years old, but they will soon be moving into the 35 to 44 age group, which the Conference Board calls "by far the most promising sector of the market — for goods and services as well as luxuries and top-of-the-line products generally."[30]

Many newspaper managers believe that young readers play a critical role in their circulation campaigns since, presumably, the young readers of today will be vital to newspapers as the circulation base of tomorrow.

In addition to attracting young readers, newspapers also are vitally interested in appealing to affluent readers. Targets of marketing efforts are worthless if they lack the means to purchase goods. Thus the special interest in affluent adults, who have doubled in number since 1975, according to Monroe Mendelsohn Research.[31]

More than 15.8 million people in the United States had incomes of at least $40,000 in 1980. Such affluent households had average, annual discretionary incomes of $15,000. Households earning less than $40,000 had less than $1,400 to spend on luxuries. Households with incomes of $50,000 or more will spend three out of every five dollars in 1990.[32]

In some cases, newspapers clearly have slanted their stories toward their young, educated and affluent readers. The editor of the Detroit **News** is reported to have instructed his news staff to aim their stories at people between the ages of 28 and 40 and who earn more than $18,000 a year. The stories "won't have a damn thing to do with Detroit and its internal problems," he is reported to have said.[33]

Down the street at the Detroit **Free Press**, the concentration is on appealing to the same younger, affluent readers the **News** is trying to attract, according to **Free Press** editor David Lawrence.[34] Some of Lawrence's reporters have complained that feature stories on stylish living have taken over column inches previously available for more serious news. But the two newspapers are locked in economic battle and their joint target is the stratum of young professionals who will be the principal shoppers for new cars, condominiums

and furniture through the next decade.

Jim Fox of the St. Louis **Post-Dispatch** asserts that today's much-maligned, expanded lifestyle sections may not be any worse than traditional approaches to society pages. Indeed, he argues, today's feature sections are a marked improvement over earlier society pages, which he describes as full of "blatant discrimination."

William Henry, in his analysis of the New York **Daily News**, suggests that newspapers are reacting to their readers' desire to forget about the city:

> Some readers simply found the paper less appealing as their sympathies shifted from city streets to development-tract playgrounds. But others were actively hostile to New York and eager to leave behind anything that reminded them of urban chaos and working class origins — of which the **News** was an emblem.[35]

Readers' disdain for the city and its working class occupants arguably coincides nicely with a similar process among top newspaper executives. As Joseph Medill Patterson, founder of the **Daily News**, long ago phrased it:

> Newspapers start when their owners are poor, and take the part of the people, and so they build up a large circulation and, as a result, advertising. That makes them rich, and they begin most naturally to associate with other rich men — they play golf with one, drink whiskey with another, and their son marries the daughter of the third. They forget about the people, and then their circulation dries up, and then their advertising, and then their paper becomes decadent.[36]

Another force making it difficult for newspapers to report adequately on the urban poor is the social makeup of news staffs. Many newspapers currently are hiring more specialty reporters, especially those with experience reporting on science, environment or business stories. Reporters expert in urban affairs are not at the top of the list of preferred specialists.

It is well documented that newspapers do not have enough minority reporters. In 1981, the percentage of newspapers with minorities on their news staffs dropped from 40 percent to 35 percent, according to Jay Harris, assistant dean of the Medill School of Journalism. The same year, there were 47,500 professional journalists — 2,400 of them — 4.6 percent — were minority members.[37] By contrast, almost 12 percent of United States citizens are black.

Tom Winship, editor of the Boston **Globe**, says "our casual attitude toward minority employment is particularly embarrassing because our mission is semi-public and because it is protected by constitutional guarantees."[38]

Related to the under-representation of minorities is the absence of a consistent minority focus to news stories. As one white, well-educated reporter for an urban daily told the author, "When we decide to do a story, we sit down and think about who we would interview. It just so happens that the people I know don't live in the ghetto."

Finally, urban newspapers have been forced to contend with the growing strength of suburban dailies. Newspaper analysts assert that suburban newspapers deal with issues that are closer to the lives and interests of the growing number of people who both live and work in the suburbs. Suburban residents, analysts say, can get their national and international news from television and news magazines. Metropolitan dailies fall into disfavor because they are viewed as superfluous.

Suburban competition has lead such major dailies as the Chicago **Tribune**, St. Louis **Post-Dispatch** and the San Francisco **Herald-Examiner** to publish special editions for outlying areas. The sections contain larger amounts of suburban community news and provide a marketing vehicle for advertisers interested in reaching those markets.

Individual reporters and editors may not subscribe to the myths listed above. But individual reporters and editors do not make management decisions in today's urban dailies. When a major revamping of a newspaper is undertaken, management turns to marketing and circulation experts, not media critics. The experts treat symptoms, not social systems. The message of the marketing people is: "You have to change with the times. You are no longer a mass medium. Give the advertisers what they want, or you will not be here tomorrow."

It cannot be denied they have a strong argument.

## PART III: PREDICTIONS — THE RICH GET RICHER, THE POOR GET POORER

Katherine Graham, chairman of the Washington **Post** Company and a president of the American Newspaper Publishers Association, told that group in February, 1982, that the newspaper business is alive and well. But she added a note of caution: "That is not to say that more big city dailies will not pass from the scene."[39]

Early in 1982, **Editor & Publisher** magazine asked three California newspaper executives to discuss the future of newspapers through the year 2000 and beyond. They agreed to a general conclusion: Tomorrow's newspapers will be targeted for special audiences. Today's general interest newspaper may become an historical relic, they said.[40]

Experts predict that the flight of urban residents to the suburbs will continue through the 1980s and beyond. In short, everyone who can afford to flee the inner city will do so.

That leaves metropolitan dailies in a pickle. Minorities and the poor will be left behind in the cities. Both have little spare change for luxury items. Advertisers are not interested in people who cannot afford to buy luxuries.

That is the scenario as it looks with today's evidence. Projections about the uncertain future of urban dailies represent responses to the problems those newspapers are facing today. Few of the projections contain affirmative visions for making the newspapers of tomorrow more relevant to inner city residents. A sampling of such projections follows:

1. **The newspaper of tomorrow will be targeted.** Says Kenneth E. Wilson, executive news editor of the San Francisco **Chronicle**:

> By the turn of the century, newspapers will become more targeted and more specialized in the way of special interest magazines. If video technology really takes off and people can get instant information on the screen, newspapers will probably get heavier into interpretation and background. We will do things video cannot do but it will mean there will no longer be a general interest newspaper.[41]

2. **Community newspapers will prosper and continue to threaten the metropolitan dailies.** Many newspaper observers state that community papers are better suited to the changing suburban market than large urban dailies. Says Larry Allison, editor of the Long Beach (Calif.) **Press Telegram**:

> The huge metro's will continue to decline while management at smaller, more efficiently run community papers who study the markets — and adapt to them — will see their papers prosper.[42]

3. **Some newspaper companies will try to serve a national market.** The Gannett Company already has entered the national, general interest newspaper market with **USA Today**. Such a publication is made possible, in part, by advances in satellite technology.

4. **The electronic newspaper will become commonplace.** Indeed, the fully electronic newsroom already is being used in some communities. The major impediment to its further expansion is the expense of implementation.

The situation is not as simple as newspapers making a conscious decision to ignore the inner cities. Rather, the problems of low-income urban residents are shunted aside as newspapers continue to struggle for financial stability.

A final thought worth mentioning. Perhaps newspapers never truly had the desire to report the problems of the urban poor. Perhaps problems facing the poor became newsworthy only when more affluent readers moved into the city to work and play. Maybe poor people's uprisings in the 1960s were relevant because they touched the lives of the middle class. Once the middle class had escaped the inner cities, the newspapers may have felt free of their purported responsibility to report on the problems of the cities.

Those questions cannot be characterized as nothing more than callous cynicism. Earl Shorris, in criticizing the **New York Times**, suggests that ignoring poverty is an institution unto itself in the United States:

> "America has always ignored its poor. The press in America served its readers from the beginning with national and international news, amusements and advertising to facilitate trade."[43]

Shorris maintains that the press has a resonsibility to force its readers to look at the world around them and to see what is happening to their fellow citizens.

The complex relationship between major cities and the metropolitan dailies has reciprocal elements: The newspaper shapes and molds the city, the city shapes and molds the newspaper. In order for both parties to profit, the relationship must be one of equality. If newspaper publishers concentrate only on what readers want, they will ignore information readers don't necessarily want, but might need.

As Anthony Smith warns, the passing of general interest newspapers portends the passing of more than just a print-oriented communications medium. An element of social cohesion, a social glue, may be lost in the process:

> The whole notion of citizenship in this century has been predicated upon the assumption that a certain modicum of contemporary knowledge is universally distributed. The newspaper carries with it the aura of a kind of citizenship committed to duties as well as rights. A society that simply did not contain a medium approximating the universality of the newspaper would be a society composed of consumers, not citizens. Information systems carry their own symbolic value in addition to their actual function.[43]

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Jim Fox, interview in St. Louis, Mo., Nov. 29, 1982.
2. The media department of Doyle, Dane & Bernbach predicted changes that will occur within the next ten years in "The Media Scene: What Will It Look Like?" **Editor & Publisher**, March 20, 1982, pp 18-19. Some of the predicted changes are; (1) publishers will become suppliers of information and teletext services; (2) satellite transmissions for national editions of several major market newspapers will be adopted; (3) there will be more emphasis on soft news and features; (4) free-standing inserts will increase; (5) zoned editions will become more prevalent; (6) new supplements will cater to special interests; and (7) suburbs will be more easy to target through geographic editions of metro papers and improved availability and quality of suburban papers.
3. Ben Bagdikian, "The Best News Money Can Buy," **Human Behavior**, October 1978.
4. O'Neill is quoted by Andrew Radolf in "FOI, EEO and Recession are Top Issues of 1982," **Editor & Publisher**, Jan. 2, 1982, p. 9.
5. Leo Bogart, "Urban Newspapers Under Pressure," **Columbia Journalism Review**, Sept./Oct. 1974, p. 36.
6. Ibid.
7. Clark Newsom, "For Competing Dailies the Disappearing Act Goes On," **presstime**, May 1981, p. 8.
8. Bogart.
9. Michael Massing, "Newspapers for the Privileged," **The Nation**, March 20, 1982, pp. 330-332.
10. Ibid.
11. **Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders**, (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co. 1968), pp. 382-386.
12. Bagdikian.
13. John Morton, "The Times of Your Lifestyle," **Washington Journalism Review**, June 1982, p. 12.
14. Bogart, p. 43.
15. Morton.
16. **Commission on Freedom of the Press: A Free and Responsible Press. A General Report on Mass Communications: Newspapers, Radio, Motion Pictures, Books and Magazines** (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974) p. vii.
17. Anthony Smith, "The Future of the Newspaper: The Waning of the Fourth Estate," **Intermedia**, August 1978.
18. Leo Bogart and Frank Orenstein, "Mass Media and Community Identity," **Journalism Quarterly**, (Spring 1965): 181.
19. Virgil Fassio, "Circulation Practices Change to Keep Vitality in Ad Medium," **Editor & Publisher**, Jan. 16, 19071, 17.
20. Bagdikian.

21. O'Neill, speaking to students at the University of Missouri School of Journalism, Oct. 28, 1982.
22. Andrew Radolf, "Survival Still Top Priority for NY Daily News," **Editor & Publisher**, March 20, 1982, p. 24.
23. Fox interview.
24. Quoted in Dan Lionel, "Ad Scene: Bigger Gains Ahead for National Advertisers—Stapleton," **Editor & Publisher**, Jan. 2, 1982, p. 18.
25. "Non-Subscriber Lists Enable 'Selective Targeting,' " **SNPA Bulletin**, Oct. 8, 1978.
26. Christo Jackson, "Direct Mail Is a Real Threat to Steal Newspaper Ad Money," **Editor & Publisher**, Oct. 31, 1981, p. 18.
27. Bradley Greenberg and Brenda Dervin, "Mass Communication Among the Urban Poor," **Public Opinion Quarterly** (Summer 1970): 35.
28. Bagdikian.
29. Larkin, Ernest and Grotto, Gerald A., "A Market Segmentation Approach to Daily Newspaper Audience Studies," **Journalism Quarterly**, 31 (Spring 79) 37.
30. "Marketing in the 80's: Part II," **Wall Street Journal**, June 27, 1980, p. 27.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Holusha, John, "Rival Papers In Detroit Bar No Holds," **New York Times**, June 6, 1982, p. 49.
34. Bagdikian, Ben, "Best News."
35. Henry, William A. III, "The Decline and Fall of the New York Daily News," Washington Journalism Review, (March 1982). Henry was critic at large for the Daily News in 1980 and 1981.
36. Quoted by A.J. Leibling in **The Press** (Ballentine Books, New York 1976) 19.
37. Winship, Tom, "Our Failure in Minority Reporting, **ASNE Bulletin** 642, May/June 1981.
38. Ibid.
39. Quoted in "Newspaper Ad Execs Told to Protect Their Franchise," **Editor & Publisher**, Feb. 6, 1982. Graham went on to urge colleagues at the American Newspaper Editors Association to find ways to increase the number of households they reach.
40. Stein, M.L., "A Futuristic Look at Newspapering," **Editor & Publisher**, 115 (Jan. 2, 1982) 12.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Anthony Smith, **Goodbye Gutenberg**, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 321.